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LOYALTY RECOMMENDED BY ITS CONNEC-
TION WITH RELIGION, AND THE EFFECTS
OF A FONDNESS FOR INNOVATION.

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE
THE MILITARY ASSOCIATION
OF THE
PARISH OF TRINITY IN THE MINORIES,
OCTOBER 7, 1798.

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BY
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RECOMMENDED BY HIS COMMISSIONER
FROM WITHIN THE ARMY AND THE ROYAL
OF A COMMITTEE FOR INNOVATION

S E R M O N

THE MILITARY ASSOCIATION

OF THE ARMY AND THE ROYAL NAVY



MEMBER OF THE ARMY AND THE ROYAL NAVY

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TO THE
WORTHY MEMBERS
OF THE
MILITARY ASSOCIATION
OF THE
PARISH OF TRINITY IN THE MINORIES,
THE FOLLOWING
SERMON,
PREACHED AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR DESIRE,
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR MOST FAITHFUL,
AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

HENRY FLY.

TO THE
WORTHY MEMBERS

OF THE

MILITARY ASSOCIATION

OF THE

PARISH OF TRINITY IN THE MINORITIES

THE FOLLOWING

SERMON

PREACHED AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST

OF THE RESPECTABLE MEMBERS

BY THE MOST REVEREND

AND OBEYANT SERVANT

HENRY J. J.

[6]

shall not excel. And yet as prejudicial as
it is to the welfare of individuals, its effects
on public measures are far more alarming.
The restless disposition of one man shall
plunge a whole
dreadful calamities; the royal and im-

SERMON, &c.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXIV. VER. 21, 22.

MY SON, FEAR THOU THE LORD, AND THE
KING, AND MEDDLE NOT WITH THEM
THAT ARE GIVEN TO CHANGE; FOR
THEIR CALAMITY SHALL RISE SUDDEN-
LY, AND WHO KNOWETH THE RUIN OF
THEM BOTH.

So powerful is the love of novelty in
some men, that they will not only gratify
it without any certainty of advantage, but
at the manifest risk of exchanging for the
worse. It defeats the very end it pretends
to have in view, the improvement of our
condition. Unstable as water, said the
good old Patriarch of one of his sons, thou

shalt not excel. And yet as prejudicial as it is to the welfare of individuals, its effects on public measures are far more alarming. The restless disposition of one man, shall plunge a whole nation into the most dreadful calamities ; the royal and inspired author of the text, therefore, recommends submission to civil authority, by connecting it with a most steady and permanent principle, the fear of the Almighty ; and by pathetically warning us of the danger of indulging a fondness for innovation.

And, first, he connects our submission to civil authority, with that we owe to God as the Supreme Governor of the universe.

His sovereignty arises from his being the first cause, and the preserver of all things. In him we live, and move, and have our being. We can neither give ourselves existence, nor prolong it, when given, at our own will. Dependent on

him for every thing we enjoy, it behoves us to receive it on the terms he imposes. He is the potter, we are the clay. His will is, that in obeying his dictates, we should secure our own felicity; while in the very nature of things, as well as by the declarations of his word, the ultimate wages of sin must be misery.

Convinced of the fitness of obeying him unreservedly, we too often find ourselves inclined to what he hath forbidden; "a law in our members warring against the law in our minds;"* a prevailing bias towards earthly and sensual gratifications. Now, as the Apostle observes, † they that are in the flesh, under the dominion of passion and appetite, cannot please God.

Man, at the creation of the world, was formed fully competent to the performance of his duty; made after the image of God, and with the rest of the crea-

* Romans, ch. vii. ver. 25.

† Ibid. ch. viii. ver. 8.

tures perfect in his kind ; but inheriting, through the fall, a nature prone to evil, impotent to good ; we now require divine assistance, to strengthen our weakness, and to correct our perverseness. In affording this aid he calls on us to obey him, not only as our Creator, but as our Redeemer also.

Here is a new and most affecting motive—"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirits, which are his."* If it ^{is} asked, with what price ? it is replied, "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot."† The covenant made with our first parents supposed man to be, as he then was, in a state of innocence, affording no provision in case of disobedience ; the tenour of it being, "thou shalt not eat of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, for in the

* 1 Corinthians, ch. vi. ver. 20.

† 1 Peter, ch. i. ver. 19.

day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* But the covenant of grace made with us in a Redeemer, considers us as already transgressors, by our native degeneracy, and perhaps much more so by actual sin. And while, in pardoning the latter on our repentance, it magnifies his mercy, it equally honours his justice by providing an atonement for even the former. So that, whether the mind is pained by a consciousness of original corruption or personal rebellion against God, it finds a complete remedy provided in the Gospel.

It is here we are taught most explicitly, and from the highest authority,† what is his will concerning us. We are not left, with the Pagans, to the uncertain decisions of human reason, enforced by the weak and often interrupted voice of conscience; or with the church of old, to view the scheme of our salvation through the veil of prophetic descriptions and ritual

* Genesis, ch. ii. ver. 17.

† Hebrews, ch. i. ver. 2.

observances ; “ but we all with open face, behold the glory of God,”* as reflected by that pure evangelical mirror, in which our duty is most distinctly defined ; and where the splendour of his perfections, and the rays of saving truth shine forth most clearly in the instructions and example of his only begotten Son.†

And forasmuch as in ourselves we can do nothing good in his sight, he there offers to “ strengthen us with might in the inner man ; ‡ to work in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure ; to give his holy spirit to them that ask him.” This carries his claim to our obedience to the highest pitch. Such as listen to the dictates of divine grace, find his commandments not grievous ; their delight is in his law ; they can adopt the language of the Psalmist, the subject of whose longest composition is the love he had to it. §

* 2 Corinthians, ch. iii. ver. 18.

† John, ch. i. ver. 18.

‡ Ephesians, ch. iii. ver. 16.

§ Psalm cxix.

Influenced by this heavenly principle, they are sweetly constrained to do his will.* In acting from nature sanctified by grace, they are naturally inclined to the path of duty, and find it so far impossible to deviate from it: agreeably to St. John's words, † "whosoever abideth in the Son of God, sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, *i. e.* knowingly and habitually, hath not seen him, neither known him." And again, "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The divine energy having turned the current of his affections, and given him, as it is termed, a new heart; he is no longer conformed to the corrupt principles or customs of the world, being transformed by the renewing of his mind. ‡

If then we would be happy in a subjection to the Lord of All, we must obey

* 2 Corinthians, ch. v. ver. 14.

† Ephesians, ch. iii. ver. 6—9.

‡ Romans, ch. xii. ver. 2.

him, as revealed in the Gospel ; as in a Mediator, “reconciling the world to himself,”* and by his “spirit helping our infirmities.”† We cannot otherwise obey him at all ; or if that were possible, obey him acceptably. In which view it is said, “this is the work of God,”‡ the grand fundamental duty now enjoined, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent ; because this virtually includes every other, represents the Supreme Being in the most amiable light, implies the most perfect revelation of his will, and by the terms of the new covenant, insures every needful aid for the due performance of it.

When the mind is thus practically acquainted with the gospel, we can with propriety and effect “beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy,

* 2 Corinthians, ch. v. ver. 19.

† Romans, ch. viii. ver. 26.

‡ John, ch. vi. ver. 29.

acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

And then only, when men are thus disposed, we can with certainty hope for a cordial submission to civil authority. For what deference to his fellow-creatures is to be expected from that man who pays none to God? or who pays him only an external homage? he may be actuated by a fear of punishment; but servile fear is a very partial motive, and will operate only so far as detection and discipline insure the execution of the penalty. He may obey from a regard to self-interest, or from an approbation of the law itself; but these may change; and to-morrow's sentiments or convenience differ from to-day's. The only universal and immutable principle of moral agency, is a prevailing regard to the will of God: God, who is witness to our most secret designs, whose animadversion no delinquent can evade, and whom it is at all times, and in all places, our advantage to please. The

* Romans, ch. xii. ver. i.

Apostle, therefore, in concert with the text, founds civil obedience on the basis of piety ; “ Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake ;* ” “ Ye must needs be subjects, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.” † Fear God, and you will honour the King. ‡

The will of God, on this head, is revealed to us by the law of nature, as well as by the Holy Scriptures. The law of nature enjoins those duties to which we find ourselves obliged, on considering the human frame, and the relations we bear to God and our fellow-creatures. Now, the subordination of some men to others, in political society, is a requisition of this law. God hath rendered it necessary, by the constitution of our nature, and the situation in which he hath placed us. It is necessary to give up a certain portion of our natural freedom to preserve the rest :

* 1 Peter, ch. ii. v. 13.

† Romans, ch. xiii.

v. 5.

‡ 1 Peter, ch. ii. v. 17.

to suffer the restraints of government, that we may not endure those of fraud and depredation : that the weaker part of the species may not lie entirely at the mercy of the stronger ; nor mankind worry and destroy each other with endless contentions. For these ends, the wisdom of some is employed to frame laws for the regulation of all ; and power delegated to others to put those laws in execution. Various are the forms of government which have obtained in different countries, and at different periods ; some, doubtless, intrinsically better than others, or better adapted to the genius of one nation than to that of another ; but the worst of them preferable to anarchy, the necessary consequence of the love of change, and which is so unnatural a state, so inimical to common sense, that some polity or other, however rude, is found among the most savage nations of the earth, yea, in various classes of the brute creation.

The Holy Scriptures exalt, enforce, and purify, from heterogeneous mixtures, the law of nature, but never contradict it : proceeding from the same source, the God of peace and order, the sovereign of the world. In them he appears condescending to be the more immediate head of the Jewish state ; which was properly a Theocracy ; in which the civil, as well as the ecclesiastical, department, was contrived, and in a good measure administered, by God himself. And what is more to our purpose, in the everlasting Gospel, which was to regulate the sentiments and conduct of men of every nation, he enjoins obedience to rulers, in the strictest terms. The divine Author of it was in this, as in all other cases, our great example : not only allowing the lawfulness of demanding tribute, but working a miracle to pay it : exhorting his hearers, to “ render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar’s ;” submitting to his bitterest enemies when vested with public authority. “ Let every soul,” saith St. Paul, “ be subject to

the higher powers ; for there is no power but of God : " * whatever defects may appear in particular forms, government in general derives its authority from him. The powers that be, are ordained of God ; whosoever therefore resisteth that power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and shall of course receive to themselves condemnation ; as ultimately disobedient to God, they not only incur the penalties of the law, but the Divine displeasure. For rulers, as such, are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou not be afraid of the power, do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same, for he is the minister of God to thee for good ; but if thou do evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain ; for he is the minister of God, a revenger, authorized by him to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Thus silencing the cavils of Democratic pride, and checking the contempt of rulers on account of the infirmities or faults with which as men they may be chargeable :

♦ Romans, ch. xiii. ver. 1.

because in them I respect not only the constitution of my country, and the public welfare, but the Divine Sovereignty. In the exercise of a legal authority, they are God's vicegerents. For this cause, adds the Apostle, pay you tribute also, for they are God's ministers, meriting support in their public exigencies. Render therefore unto all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour; in doing which you render unto God the things that are God's.

To the general motives for which, common to all who fear the Lord, we have many peculiar to us as subjects of the British empire. I might easily expatiate on the excellence of its political system; that venerable structure, not like the pandemonium of a modern Republic, conjured up on a sudden by the fiends of cruelty, avarice, and ambition, but gradually formed and improved by the progressive wisdom of a long series of ages. I might endeavour to enumerate the invaluable bless-

ings it secures to the meanest individual, did not the portion of Holy Writ we have chosen for our present guide, rather lead us to contemplate the converse of the subject, and teach us the advantages of government in general, and particularly to value and support our own, by reminding us of the dire effects of indulging a fondness for innovation.

For which I need not refer you to the history of ancient kingdoms, but barely call to your recollection the sad events of the last century in our own. When the subversion of the government was followed by its usual train of confiscation, exile, disgrace, and public executions, till the successive tyranny of contending parties terminated in the usurped dominion of one man, exercising a more than regal authority, and desirous, though not daring to assume the name. I might remind you of the specimens of popular fury, short lived as they were, in the year 1780; which never had proceeded to the lengths

they did, had an institution like the present been general.—To a voluntary Association we were then indebted for the preservation of the metropolis. Or if the traces of those calamities have been in some degree obliterated by the peace and prosperity we have since enjoyed, I need only point you to the bloody scenes which will long stain the annals of another nation, now labouring under the sad effects of having been, beyond example, given to change, and yet plunging every day deeper and deeper, from the same restless disposition, into guilt and misery. Having by one general effort broken the iron rod of despotism, and established the sovereignty of the laws, France might have remained free and happy. But a few speculative men, on the one hand, trusting rather to their own fanciful theories, than to the only sure test of political measures, experience; and a set of adventurers on the other, who, destitute of character or property, could rise only by the downfall of their country, united to accomplish

it, by pretending to introduce a system of equality, not more inconsistent with the maxims of sound policy than with the essential principles of human nature. Inequality of rank and fortune is one grand spur to industry and improvement: and while men are born with different qualities of mind and body, some will and must gain advantages to which others will be strangers. They will acquire a superiority of wealth and knowledge, and consequently of influence. They will, in the natural course of things, attain power and pre-eminence; and whether names and titles are retained or abolished, the things signified by them will continue the same. From the mightiest empire to the smallest family, subordination is not only expedient, but necessary to its existence: nor is the business of any society ever so well conducted as when, under the control of law and justice, there is a head empowered to preserve order, and to execute with vigour and promptitude the cool dictates of deliberative wisdom.

As the end proposed by these modern politicians was in itself unfeasible, so the means adopted have been iniquitous beyond measure. The constitution of the year 1791 dissolved just after the National Assembly had solemnly sworn to maintain it; and by a public decree, made it death to propose its alteration. The sovereign brought before a self-erected tribunal, where the same parties are law-givers, accusers, and judges: having been pronounced inviolable, he is charged with high crimes and misdemeanors; and while unconvicted by that degree of evidence, which in this country is necessary to the punishment of the most atrocious offender, he is condemned without the liberty of appeal, and executed without mercy.

The same fickle and sanguinary spirit actuates their subsequent proceedings. The poignard of the assassin is substituted for the sword of justice. Inevitable ruin attends those who dare oppose the party of

the day. Every department of the state is split into factions who vow vengeance on each other, of which no sanctity of office, no elevation of rank, protects the object, no form of public trial appears to sanction the execution. The laws of nations and of nature, the eternal rules of moral virtue, and the positive institutions of Heaven, as well as their own, yield to the love of change. Such is Gallic liberty ! the fruit of an almost general desertion of religious principles. They have said, not only in their hearts, but in their writings and public debates, there is no God, and have acted accordingly : lost to those sentiments of piety which, as we have seen, are the true source of civil obedience, they acknowledge no sovereignty but that of passion and caprice.

And yet thus far might they have proceeded, exciting the astonishment of surrounding nations, and their compassion towards the victims of party rage, had they been content to have acted on their

avowed maxims, of declining all offensive wars, of settling their own government, and allowing other nations the same privilege. But desirous to avert the eyes of the people from their calamities, and to gratify a national thirst for universal sway, they have endeavoured to carry their innovating frenzy into every quarter of the globe; to form a party in the bosom of every state, devoted to their cause; and by dividing, to conquer. They have declared war against neutral powers. They have not only impoverished their subjects,* but seized the property and persons of their friends,† while amusing them with the cry of peace. They have carried fire and the sword into the dominions of their ancient allies,‡ without a reason, and with scarcely a pretext.

They have thus rendered it, in every nation, an act of self-preservation to repress

* France, Italy, and the Netherlands.

† America. ‡ Switzerland and Turkey.

their violence, to baffle their insidious arts, to disable them, as far as may be, from disturbing in future the repose of mankind.

To attain these salutary ends, the governors of this country have called upon the inhabitants at large to arm in its defence. You, my honoured brethren of the Association, have obeyed the call. While the regular forces and the militia repair where-soever the motions of the enemy may require them, to repel invasion, or rather, by being prepared, to prevent it; your less hazardous, though not less important, office it is, to preserve tranquillity among ourselves. To guard your property, families, liberty, religion, and laws against internal foes—to aid the civil power—to observe the conduct of disaffected persons—to suppress the first risings of tumult—to check the clamours of sedition—to convince unprincipled minds that the order of society is not to be disturbed, legal authority to be insulted, or the constitution, in any of its branches, to be violated with

impunity; by preserving it entire, to promote its great ends, the interests of piety and virtue, of peace and justice, of decency and order; in one word, the utmost possible prosperity of these kingdoms.

In doing this you will recognize the Author of every blessing, who in these points hath distinguished us above the other nations of the earth; who wills the happiness of his creatures; whose kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: whose authority our enemies renounce; whose final judgment they expect not;* whose revealed will they reject; whose Sabbath they have abolished; whose altars they have overturned; whose temples they have prophaned; whose providence and being, a large portion of them deny; † making religion, occasionally, a

many
* ~~Every~~ burial place in France bears this melancholy inscription, "Death is an eternal sleep." See a Residence in France during the years 1792—5, in a series of Letters, Vol. 2. p. 334—31.

† "Reason dethrones both the kings of the earth

mask to conceal their nefarious designs; Papists at Rome; Mahometans in Egypt; but Atheists at home, and tyrants every where. It is not, as on former occasions, a contest about territory, or points of commerce alone, that we are sustaining; not merely our national existence is threatened, they would rob us of all those consolations, derived more immediately from above, which support the mind under the heaviest temporal afflictions, which remain amid the loss of all things, beside, to cheer it with the assurance of another and a better world, a state of endless bliss, and undisturbed security.

and the kings of heaven. No Monarchy above, if we wish to preserve our Republic below." Volumes have been written to determine, whether or no a republic of atheists could exist. I maintain that every other republic is a chimera. If you once admit the existence of a heavenly Sovereign, you introduce the wooden horse within your walls. What you adore by-day, will be your destruction at night." Extract from the Report of the Committee of public Instruction, printed by the order and with the approbation of the National Convention.

It then becomes, if ever there were one, a sacred war : the battle is the Lord's. Be strong, quit you like men, for the Lord fighteth for us : of which he hath given us numerous signal and recent instances. May we be duly impressed with his goodness ; may it lead us to repentance ; may it subdue the rebellion of our hearts against him ; and induce us to put away from our camp every accursed thing ; to renounce all iniquity ; to embrace the offers of salvation on his own terms, of faith and sincere obedience ; and we may confidently adopt the language of the Prophet to a haughty and successful invader, "the Virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath laughed thee to scorn ; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lift up thine eyes on high ? even against the Holy One of Israel ; and hast said, with the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will

cut down the tall cedars thereof.—I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.” How similar the style of the “great King” to that of the Great Nation. “Yes,” saith God to the proud Assyrian, “thou hast been a scourge to other states, but it was as an instrument in my hand, to be cast aside at pleasure: intended, for a while, to punish national crimes, to check the corruptions of my people, to purify, not to destroy them, to bring them to a penitential sense of their disloyalty to me, and then to receive the due *reward* of thy own impiety. Hast thou not heard long ago how I done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, ^{that} thou shouldst be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power; they were dismayed and confounded. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. I will put my hook in thy nostrils,

and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way that thou camest." Agreeably to this and many other predictions, Babylon, the inveterate opposer of the Church of God, and who not only, like our ambitious foe, coveted universal dominion, but had in some measure attained it, was punished in her turn, her empire destroyed, and her very place, after a time, no where to be found.

A just sense of the Divine interposition and favour will guard my patriotic friends against those sins, which may in their military character, most easily beset them. The fear of God, while it inspires the truest courage, and subdues all other fear, precludes self-confidence. We shall not trust in an arm of flesh. Conscious that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ; we shall say with the royal Psalmist, " it is not my sword nor my bow that shall help me, but it is thou, Lord, that savest us from our enemies, and puttest them to confusion that

hate us." It will teach us to be social without intemperance, and animated without prophaneness ; at once to save our country and our souls ; while preserving our national independency, and the blessings of a mild and free government, to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life ; nor, when the struggles of mortality are ended, shall we exchange the matchless privileges of this favoured Isle, but for that " crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give unto all them that love his appearing."*

* 2 Tim. chap. iv. ver. 8.

THE END.

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The distinguishing Goodness of God to Great Britain,

by the same Author,

A SERMON

Preached in the Parish Church of

TRINITY IN THE MINORIES,

ON FEBRUARY 28, 1794.

Being the Day appointed for

A PUBLIC FAST.